

**Testimony Regarding Support for HB 5283 & SB 229 and
School Construction Funds for Public Charter Schools
March 4, 2022**

Dear of the Education Committee Members,

My name is Jessica Ramos-Mouning, I am a resident of Bridgeport Connecticut and a mother of 3 wonderful brown skinned babies who mean the world to me. I also work for Great Oaks Public Charter School and in the past worked for the Bridgeport Public Schools. My kids currently attend a private school, choice in education is paramount to me and my family.

I am here to ask that you help us secure the necessary funds in the proposed budget to ensure we close the \$713 million racial education funding gap present in our public school system. We have a surplus unlike any other year in recent memory or ever than I can recall.

Our children can no longer be ignored, as taxpayers and engaged constituents we can not allow decisions to be made that ignore kids in our communities, especially when we have the money as a state to invest in their education. We can say we are supporting our youth to be leaders and take on the opportunities of the future, and then not fund them according to their needs. We can't boast that we are a great state while turning a blind eye to those underserved, marginalized black and brown kids in our communities.

In order to equalize the way we fund kids, we need a student-centered funding system that fully funds all students based on their needs regardless of their race, class, zip code, or type of school they attend. We have fought for years as a choice community, as proud proponents of public charter schools, because our kids are always left behind others. Schools like mine have gone above and beyond during the pandemic to serve our kids, to meet their needs. Can we ensure the state budget does the same?

For example, as we all know, operating a safe school is a necessity especially while our state continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. Great Oaks had to use the COVID relief money to pay for improvements to our school because Connecticut does not provide money for building improvements for public charter schools. No other public school is treated this way. We need funding from the state for facilities for our schools; our charter schools are forced to use money that should go toward instruction and programming for facilities instead.

Last but not least I stand in solidarity with the Danbury families that have waited 8 long years to open their charter school. Families need choice in education, as taxpayers and constituents we can no longer be ignored; In order to have access to choice we must amend the state's oppressive process for opening up new charter schools.
Stand with us!

With respect,

Jessica Ramos-Mouning
Bridgeport, CT Resident